

pled corn caused them, to advance more slowly and kept them longer under fire. On the other hand, the same causes delayed the Prussians in their junction,<sup>1</sup> which they had promised to effect about noon.<sup>2</sup>

Soon after eleven<sup>3</sup> the battle commenced by the advance of the French under Jerome Bonaparte, upon Hougomont, which was occupied by some Nassau and Hanover troops, and by the light companies of the English Guards, and the first gun fired was from an English battery. This made a gap for a moment in the head of the advancing column. A tremendous cannonade along the whole French line, from upwards of 200 guns, opened to support this attack. Napoleon's eagle glance at once discovered the great importance of the post of Hougomont, which was, in fact, the key to the English position. He accordingly directed his first efforts against it, and persevered in them unceasingly throughout the day.

"A cloud of *tirailleurs* pushed through the wood and cornfields ; they were aimed at with fatal certainty from the loopholes, windows, and summit of the building. But the French eventually compelled the few men that remained outside to withdraw into the chateau by the rear gate. In the mean time the French redoubled their efforts against it, and the fire of the immediate defenders of that point for a moment ceased. The gate was then forced. At this critical moment Colonel Macdonell rushed to the spot with the officers and men nearest at hand, and not only expelled the assailants but reclosed the gate. The French, from their overwhelming numbers, again entered the yard, when the Guards retired to the house and kept up from the windows such a destructive

<sup>1</sup> The delay of Napoleon on the 17th of June has been much criticised, but the Prince Edouard d'Auvergne, in his *Waterloo*, p, 236, points out that this delay had not the effect believed to result from it. Wellington would have retired, if hard pressed on the 17th of June, instead of halting at Waterloo. At the worst Blücher, however hardly pressed in his movement, would have only had to leave two corps to detain Grouchy, indeed less than one corps was found sufficient, and the remaining two corps would have been enough to crush the main army while engaged with Wellington.

<sup>2</sup> Captain Pringle.

<sup>3</sup> Accounts differ as to the precise period at which the battle commenced. The British official account states the time to have been ten o'clock; but Colonel Mackinnon, who was with the Guards at Hougomont, has a precise recollection that the first gun was fired shortly after eleven. t  
—Editor of 1836 edition.